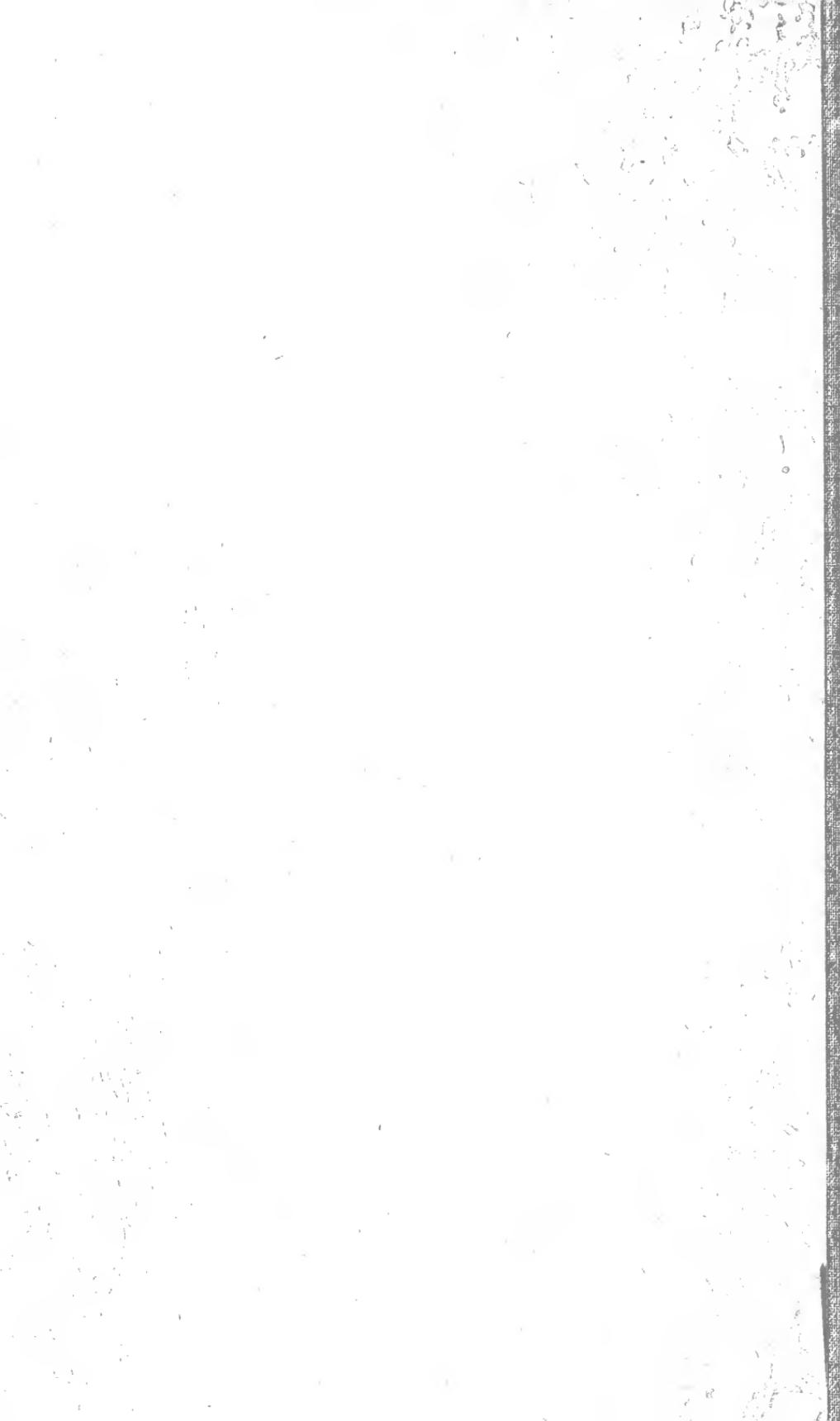


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# THE ARMENIAN QUESTION.

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ITS MEANING TO GREAT BRITAIN.

By CAPTAIN C. F. DIXON JOHNSON.

*"A great Power cannot with impunity change the fundamental principles of its attitude." — Metternich.*

PRICE 3d.



# The Armenian Question.

## ITS MEANING TO GREAT BRITAIN.

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In Asiatic Turkey there exists no geographical area which can properly be described as Armenia. Armenians chiefly reside in 9 vilayets or provinces, where they form but a small minority, about 15 per cent. of the population. They live in scattered communities and are bitterly divided by religious animosities between the Gregorian, Protestant and Roman Catholic Christians. The ignorant Gregorian mountaineers of the East have nothing in common with the highly educated, shrewd Roman Catholic Armenians of Angora, Smyrna, and Constantinople, and only with difficulty can the Armenians of the North converse with the Turkish speaking Armenians of the South. According to Sir Charles Wilson's article in the "Encyclopædia Britannica."

*The 9 Villayets are:—*

VAN, Bitlis,  
MAMURET-UL-AZIZ,  
DIARBECIR, ERZERUM,  
SIVAS, ALEPPO, ADANA,  
TREBIZOND.

*Population:—*

|  |     |     |     |           |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-----------|
| ARMENIANS (Gregorians, Protestants, Roman Catholics) | ... | ... | ... | 925,000   |
| MOSLEMS (Turks and Kurds)                            | ... | ... | ... | 4,460,000 |
| GREEKS and other Christians                          | ... | ... | ... | 645,000   |
| JEWS, GYPSIES, etc.                                  | ... | ... | ... | 100,000   |
|  |     |     |     | 6,130,000 |

\* This figure is an outside estimate.

Only the first five vilayets contain a strong population of Armenians, and out of 159 Kazas or sub-districts in only 9 can the Armenians, taking the most favourable estimate, be said to be in a majority (seven of these Kazas are near Van and two near Mush).

The emigration of Armenians into Adana and Trebizon was encouraged by Russian agents, with a view to secure for Russia in the event of occupation most important harbours on the Black and Mediterranean Seas.



contains populations of many different races and creeds, possessing no capacity for self-government and no aspirations for independence, but owing their tranquility and whatever prospect of political well-being they possess entirely to the rule of the Sultan. But the Government of the Ottoman dynasty is that of an ancient but still alien conqueror, resting more upon actual power than upon the sympathies of common nationality. The defeat which the Turkish arms have sustained and the known embarrassments of the Government will produce a general belief in its decadence and an expectation of speedy political change, which in the East are more dangerous than actual discontent to the stability of a Government. If the population of Syria, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia see that the Porte has no guarantee for its continued existence but its own strength, they will, after the evidence which recent events have furnished of the frailty of that reliance, begin to calculate upon the speedy fall of the Ottoman domination, and to turn their eyes towards its successor. Even if it be certain that Batoum and Ardahan and Kars will not become the base from which emissaries of intrigue will issue forth, to be in due time followed by invading armies, the mere retention of them by Russia will exercise a powerful influence in disintegrating the Asiatic dominion of the Porte. As a monument of feeble defence on the one side, and a successful aggression on the other, they will be regarded by the Asiatic population as foreboding the course of political history in the immediate future, and will stimulate, by the combined action of hope and fear, devotion to the Power which is in the ascendant, and desertion of the Power which is thought to be falling into decay."

Russia is said to have objected to the right of Turkey to select the European officials whether British or others for employment in Kurdistan to carry out the necessary reforms, Under Article LXI. of the Treaty of Berlin the Sublime Porte undertook to carry out reforms in the provinces inhabited by Armenians and to periodically make known the steps taken to this effect to the Powers who will superintend their application. This Article in no way committed the Porte to an acceptance of International Control in these Provinces as is clearly shewn by Lord Salisbury's letter to Mr. Layard, dated May 30th, 1878, in which he says:—"The determination of the reforms to be accomplished in Europe has been intrusted by the Treaty of Berlin to a European

Commission to be specially nominated for that purpose. But in reference to the reforms to be accomplished in Asia a different course has been adopted. . . . The measures required specially for the Armenians are by the Treaty of Berlin to be determined in the first instance by the Sultan, but they are to be communicated to the other signatories of the Treaty, who reserve the right to supervise the application of them."

Russia, as a counter proposal, suggests forcing upon Turkey a scheme of International control which would practically abolish the sovereignty of Turkey in her own dominions and which, as an insult to their national prestige, would be most distasteful to the great majority of the inhabitants and would probably lead to their giving vent to their wrath by persecuting the small minority, whom they would naturally consider responsible.

The ferocity of the Kurd would increase in the very proportion that the Turk lost prestige. Surely the British Government should beware of becoming an accessory to foisting a scheme which is bound to end so disastrously.

Russia's reasons for objecting are because :—

- (1) Once British officials were installed along the frontiers of Kurdistan, her facilities for smuggling in arms and for sending in agents provocateurs to stir up troubles would be very much curtailed
- (2) The country would be in closer touch with the European Press and the British officials on the spot would fearlessly report the true facts.
- (3) Under good government the Provinces would speedily become prosperous and contented and Turkey herself would be in a proportionately stronger financial and military position.
- (4) And the excuse for intervention would then cease to exist.

By suggesting International control, Russia hopes that one of two things may happen, either :—

- (1) That Turkey will refuse point blank, and even if she subsequently consents it will take so long a time to appoint the commission that next Spring or even later Russia will be still free to provoke disturbance, an abortive rising followed by Kurdish retaliation, giving her an excuse for direct invasion.
- (2) Or that if the Commission is appointed her claim to be the most interested as being the neighbouring state will be accepted and that, in consequence, she will have the preponderating influence in the appointment of the officials, who would really become Russian agents to create disturbances which must lead to eventual intervention, on the ground that this was the only possible solution.

The failure of international administration to restrain the organised bands of disorder sent in by outside agencies under Russian auspices resulted in the state of anarchy and suffering throughout the Balkan provinces which culminated in the two recent terrible wars. Yet, as one of the leading Liberal journals in this country recently stated, three out of every four of the people of Macedonia would be delighted to-day to see the Turks back again. All friends of the Turks and the Armenians must dread the terrible conditions which Russian agency would provoke before actual intervention came and what might happen after such intervention may well baffle description.

It is absurd to suggest that the Turk, with proper training cannot become a good and enlightened administrator; he is acknowledged by those who know him best to be honest and humane. Sir Adam Block has said that he found the Turks employed in the service of the Ottoman debt very capable of doing the work allotted to them; nor are those who saw the marvellous energy with which Nечет Bey and his Chief of the Staff, Fethly Bey, organised from nothing the successful resistance against the Italian attack in Tripoli willing to believe that the Turk is effete and played out and incapable of administration. What Turkey, however, does lack is a trained body of officials to replace the rotten and



these unhappy districts of Asia to stir up strife and bloodshed. Disowned and distrusted by the resident Armenians and by the priesthood these wretches did not hesitate to wreak their vengeance on their own people. There were even murders and shootings in the streets of London. Rich and peaceful Armenians were terrorised and blackmailed in New York until at length the police unearthed the conspiracy and found cellars full of bombs and revolvers ready for use not in Asia but in America.

The Armenian peasant has seen his dream of independence turn to a nightmare, with a horrible awakening. He realizes the value of Russian friendship and has heard of the persecution and forced conversion of his brethren under Russian rule; he knows now how, when deceived by Russian agents and self-seeking revolutionaries he suffered the tortures of hell, it was Russia that refused to join Great Britain in intervention on his behalf.

The Turkish government has readily recognised the capacity of loyal Armenians by raising them to the highest offices of the state. The present regime is not only particularly well disposed to the more highly educated Armenians but also to the peasantry whom they consider the hardest working and best tax paying element in the Empire. Their Turkish and Kurdish neighbours are not forgetful that during the recent Balkan war the Armenians proved themselves men of greater courage than they were credited with and loyally fought by the side of their Moslem fellow countrymen when Greek and Bulgar deserted from the ranks. Russia foresees the danger of a settlement, and Russian agents are secretly at work in every province and in every hamlet urging the downfall of the Turk, setting Kurd against Armenian and Armenian against Kurd. The Revolutionary Committees, well provided with funds, are also preparing for an active campaign.

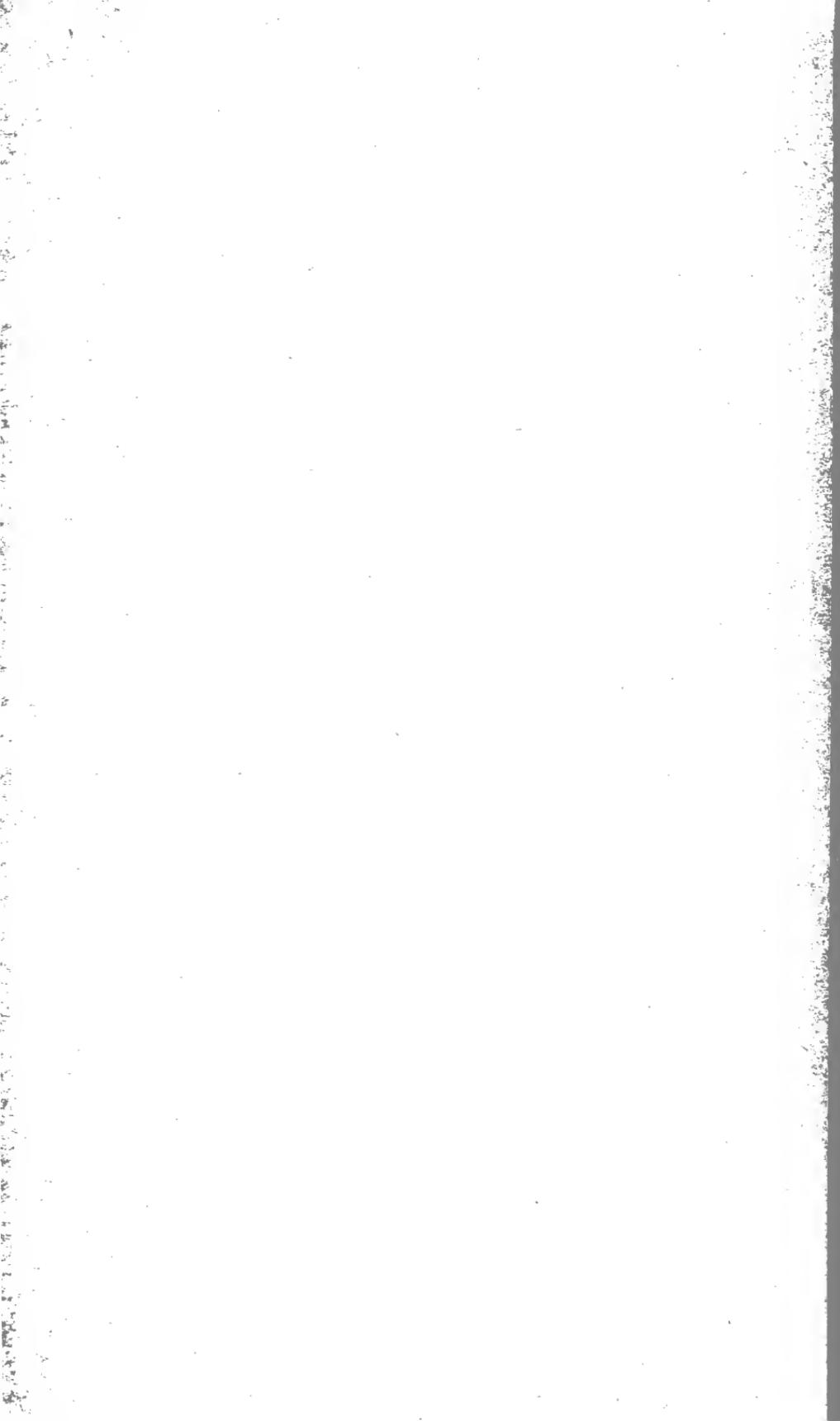
For the sake of humanity Great Britain must accede to the urgent Turkish request for support and for administrators.

But apart from altruistic ideals the strategic effects of any further advance of Russia into Asiatic Turkey requires the most serious consideration in respect to the Persian Gulf











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